

**Board of Forestry and Fire Protection  
Range Management Advisory Committee (RMAC)**

**Policy Focus Group**

**Minutes  
December 5, 2006**

**Attending:**

**RMAC:**

**Representing**

Ken Zimmerman	California Cattlemen's Association
Mike Connor	Public Member
Clancy Dutra	California Farm Bureau Federation
J.R. McCollister	Public Member
Neil McDougald	California Cattlemen's Association
Chuck Pritchard	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
Leonard Hale	Watershed Fire Council of Southern California
Mel Thompson	California Wool Growers Association
Jeff Stephens	CDF / RMAC Executive Secretary

**Members of the Public:**

John Donnelly	Wildlife Conservation Board
Tacy Curry	California Assoc. of Resource Conservation Districts
Pete Holloran	Graduate Student, University of California, Santa Cruz

**Items 1, 2, & 3 Call to Order, Introductions, Review of the October 2006 Minutes:**

Ken Zimmerman called the meeting to order and asked for introductions of all present. He elected to defer approval of the minutes until the full RMAC meeting on December 6<sup>th</sup>.

**Item 4, Discussion of the concept paper, "Integrating Natural Resource Management in California with Resource Conservation Investments."**

Ken Zimmerman thanked the guests for appearing before RMAC. He then initiated discussion on the subject of resource investments and management. Mr. Zimmerman indicated that the Board has asked RMAC to do further investigation on the subject, hence the invitations to John Donnelly and Pete Holloran to join the discussion today.

Ken Zimmerman asked Pete Holloran to provide a summary of his paper "Obstacles to Land Stewardship in California" providing some of his conclusions and an explanation why he became involved with the subject matter.

Mr. Holloran stated that he has been working as a land practitioner working mostly on weed control before returning to graduate school to work on this project. The work is funded by a grant from the California Policy Research Center. He and UC Professor Daniel Press have discovered that it is much easier to raise money for land acquisition as compared to

management. Funding for management is impacted by Prop 13 and the measures that came after that which have created a backlog of managed lands. Schools parks and other facilities are part of that infrastructure that is difficult to maintain. These are bond funds that basically are ineligible to use for maintenance due to the tax code. It is not possible to borrow money at a tax exempt rate and then set that money aside and earn interest for the purpose of maintenance. Another factor is the California Constitution which prevents the use of bond funds for maintenance. This is not a new problem. Agencies and environmental groups are well aware of the situation.

Another major issue discussed in the paper is the question of how do we determine if land is being managed. What are the measures that you examine to make this determination, and cited this morning's presentation by the Central Coast Rangeland Coalition (CCRC) as an example of how certain groups like the CCRC are stepping up to address the maintenance of private lands. Pete Holloran argued for compensation for these individuals that provide public benefit on private lands.

Mr. Holloran stated that stewardship of publicly acquired lands is politically a highly charged issue. There are several reasons for this:

- 1) With limited funds one must decide which lands shall be managed.
- 2) What are the performance measures that determine the level of successful management? Is there a management plan?
- 3) Finding ways to increase funding for management.
- 4) If we can not manage acquired land then the question becomes one of whether they should be acquired. Pete Holloran expressed his opinion that this should not be the take home message.

Mr. Holloran passed out a 2 page summary of the paper.

Ken Zimmerman deferred questions until after John Donnelly had an opportunity to make comment.

John Donnelly began his discussion with a brief history of the Wildlife Conservation Board (WCB), which was established in 1947. Although considered to be part of DFG the WCB is an independent body acting under the direction of the WCB Board. Originally their authority was for the acquiring of property for DFG. This changed in 1990 with the passage of proposition 117. This allowed the WCB the authority to make grants to others for doing the same kind of work. The Wildlife Restoration Fund provided for public acquisitions, however, this fund has basically dried up. Since the passage of Prop 117 there have been other bond funds that are providing significant amounts of funding for land acquisition by the WCB beginning with Prop 12, 13, 40, 50, and 84.

One critical component of Prop 40 pertinent to this discussion is the ability to fund the writing of management plans. They are able to fund plans for DFG lands.

Prop 84 provided \$450,000,000 to the WCB. Of this \$180,000,000 is allocated to forest land conservation, and \$135,000,000 is for historical projects statewide. \$25,000,000 of this is allocated for the maintenance of infrastructure, buildings, roads, etc.

John Donnelly stated that there is recognition on the part of WCB that management is a problem. Currently, part of the proposals that come before the WCB for land acquisition

includes an accounting of how DFG intends to manage the properties. Ken Zimmerman asked how recent is the requirement that WCB account for management of acquired properties. Mr. Donnelly responded stating that it started with Prop 12 about the year 2000.

Subsequent discussion confirmed that using bond money to fund maintenance is a problem, and a point of confusion regarding the authority to do so under current law. Possible solutions posed have been the establishment of endowment funds for maintenance from the private sector. However, in general, per comments by Pete Holloran, most donors prefer their money being used for acquisition rather than maintenance. John Donnelly cited the Yolo Bypass Wildlife Area as a success story where a partnership is working for maintenance.

Jeff Stephens asked John Donnelly how the WCB meets the requirement of Department of Finance for the maintenance of property as a condition of purchase. Mr. Donnelly responded stating that most of the areas are expansions of existing wildlife areas that may receive additional DFG staffing, or grants to others for the acquisition, or the purchase of easements.

Clancy Dutra confirmed with Pete Holloran and John Donnelly that the management requirement on lands acquired by DFG are different than that of State Parks. State Parks is in "a better situation" as far as the authority to manage acquired property.

Ken Zimmerman asked John Donnelly if RMAC can do anything to assist the WCB in dealing with the problem of maintenance. Mr. Donnelly stated that he knows of no easy fix for the problem. He further stated the problem stems from the state finance system. If managers could be assured that the funds generated by the property were cycled back for use on the property then the incentive for management would be greater, as is the case of the Yolo Bypass. Presently if funds simply go to the general fund then managers neither have the incentive or the funds for proper management. Chuck Pritchard asked who the appropriate person is with DFG to speak with and promote the Yolo Bypass model. John Donnelly recommended that RMAC begin with the Regional Managers. Pete Holloran stated that it goes back to the Department of Finance. Cycling funds generated by the property back to the property for maintenance is viewed as a threat to funding other non related activities. Clancy Dutra concurred stating that the funds may be diverted to multiple uses having nothing to do with the DFG property. He further stated that bonds purchased in the current year are actually paid for out of next years general fund dollars. So future general fund dollars are being restricted by previous voter approved bond funds.

Tacy Curry stated that the RCDs are getting more involved in public properties. Some of these funds come from environmental license plate funds that do not stay with DFG. The RCDs are proposing that a portion of bond funds passed in a given year be used for the maintenance of property already under public ownership.

Chuck Pritchard noted that over half of the state is in public ownership and not being managed properly in many cases, therefore questioning the bigger issue of whether additional purchase is a wise course. If management is not possible under current law then the law should be changed.

Mel Thompson asked why the Yolo Bypass project was able to funnel dollars back to the Wildlife Area for management whereas others do not have this ability. John Donnelly stated that the lease with the RCD is key for making this model work. Tacy Curry and

Chuck Pritchard explained that the RCD is receiving the lease funds directly and then dispersing these amounts to pay for the infrastructure maintenance. Mel Thompson posed the question as to why this model is not emulated by others. Pete Holloran stated he believes that it is due to present staff being overwhelmed and lacking the resources to carry it out. Yolo Bypass just happens to have staff and circumstances to make it work.

Neil McDougald asked for a definition of the term “de minimus” found within the Pete Holloran paper. Pete Holloran explained that it references actions that have no impact on the resources or persons in question.

Ken Zimmerman refocused the discussion on the original assignment from the Board, which he identified to be developing a recommendation for maintenance of publicly acquired land that has the Board’s support. In response John Donnelly cited another example for RMAC’s consideration, whereby the WCB is able to leverage funding for land acquisition by bringing non government contributors to the table. By doing so the WCB is able to increase funding available for purchasing property, relying on the private sources to finance an endowment fund for maintenance.

Pete Holloran offered the following suggestions for RMAC actions:

- 1) Highlight where the process does work such as the Yolo Bypass.
- 2) Establishment of a good neighbor policy fund with a competitive pool of money to do work. Public agencies would compete for these dollars to address management problems that impact neighboring properties. This process is working in New Zealand.
- 3) Bring these issues to the attention of legislators. Perhaps the greatest contribution.

Pete Holloran stated that in his opinion the next big issue for the Nature Conservancy (TNC) and others is stewardship of acquired properties especially with passage of bonds this past November.

Mel Thompson stated that producers that practice conservation and good land on stewardship on private property are motivated by different factors than government people on public lands. We should recognize these differences; however, if the TNC and others are getting serious about the issue then the time has come to put debate aside and deal with the issue. Pete Holloran agreed with Mr. Thompson.

John Donnelly mentioned the California Rangeland Coalition (CRC) as a possible forum for dealing with the issue. Ken Zimmerman noted that the groups represented by the CRC are the target audience. Tacy Curry stated that there is disagreement within this group on how public lands should be managed especially regarding perceived conflicts that may exist between public and ag uses.

Chuck Pritchard asked if it is possible for bond money to pay for a water development project on publicly acquired property. John Donnelly stated that restoration work of this type is permitted and occurs with funds from the WCB.

John Donnelly recommended focusing on success stories rather than what is not working. The agencies already are aware of what is not working. There are good case studies that may be promoted. Pete Holloran concurred stating that the Yolo case study is the way to go, and articulating these success stories to the Department of Finance is important.

The discussion turned to finding staff and funding to write the RMAC proposed paper. CDF staff was mentioned. Mel Thompson proposed that since TNC is now considering maintenance to be important, and since they do have staff, perhaps the TNC could be persuaded to become the principle authors. Tacy Curry indicated that they have funds for updating the Grazing for Change document and that perhaps some of these funds could be used to create a case study illustrating the need for stewardship on public lands. Pete Holloran volunteered his time to serve as a conduit to the environmental community. He further stated that the concept being put forth does not have to be proven. There is probably already enough information, part of which he could provide, to make the case and write a concise paper for the target audience.

Ken Zimmerman asked how we identify other success stories. Tacy Curry stated that she would be able to assist with this and cited the CRMP process as good examples of successful projects. The Feather River CRMP was cited.

Ken Zimmerman confirmed with Tacy Curry that she would look into the Grazing for Change process to highlight case studies. She can provide examples to RMAC following the next conference call with her group.

Pete Holloran volunteered to provide additional contacts. He further recommended that the legislators are the target audience, and that agencies already recognize the problem.

Ken Zimmerman asked John Donnelly if there is anything RMAC can do to assist the WCB. Mr. Donnelly responded stating that getting the word out and initiating the dialogue would be of help. He emphasized that we all have a common goal of maintaining open space. He further stated that Marilyn Cundiff has good ideas on the issue.

Clancy Dutra brought the discussion back to the original task as assigned by the Board. He stated that RMAC is not to recommend purchase or no purchase of property. Our task is to provide a recommendation for property that is currently under public ownership. He recommended that RMAC pursue the idea of case studies that demonstrate success, and that RMAC look at having the Board pursue the notion of having a check-off on the State Income tax for maintenance of these properties. These funds would not go into the DFG fund subject to being diverted to non-maintenance uses, but rather a new fund intended for maintenance of publicly acquired land.

Chuck Pritchard used the Chimineas ranch as an example of recently acquired property with potential to generate revenue for sustainable management of the property. However, managers do not have the staffing or inclination to pursue a self-sustaining system of management for the property. Mel Thompson used Mr. Pritchard's example to pose the question, how many of the current public land managers are thinking in these terms. That is, to use income from the property to leverage additional funding for the management of the property.

Tacy Curry stated that in her opinion many state land managers are not well versed in the grant application process and do not realize that a lot of what they wish to do can be accomplished with available grant funding.

Neil McDougald stated that he believes we have identified quite well the problem, and we have identified some success stories such as the Yolo Bypass. He noted that he does not

know just how many properties with this problem exists, but the service RMAC should provide to the Board is to provide some alternatives for the Board on how the problem may be addressed, and as stated by John Donnelly get the word out to those that need to know.

Ken Zimmerman asked about RMAC recommendations which he purposely avoided in his paper, making the point that somewhere in the RMAC product there needs to be recommendations. Mike Connor suggested that one recommendation would be that the Board makes public the mismanagement of public land. He further stated that RMAC recommends encouraging examples of good management where you have private and public cooperation. There is also the possibility of the tax check-off discussed earlier. Mel Thompson offered the formation of financial strategy teams for each property that could develop a plan for financing management.

Ken Zimmerman asked for an electronic copy of the Holloran paper. Tacy Curry stated that she will scan the document and send it as a word document to Ken Zimmerman. Mr. Zimmerman asked all RMAC members to review the Holloran paper and submit pertinent information to him as a result of the review.

Ken Zimmerman asked Chuck Pritchard to ask Joe Morris to write-up something for his property.

Jeff Stephens was asked to get acreage figures on total acres held by the following agencies: State Parks, DFG, and CDF.

Mel Thompson raised the issue of easements as being part of the RMAC paper. As a group the committee elected to stay focused on purchased properties rather easements.

Jeff Stephens advised RMAC that one component of successful operations such as the Yolo Bypass is that creative, bright people came together and approached the problem of management with a new methodology. Perhaps this should be a recommendation to the Board. A potential solution will require creative new approaches to financing management and maintenance that is tailored to each property.

**Item 5, New and Unfinished Business:**

None

**Item 6, Public Comment:**

None

Adjourn